WHIRRAKEE

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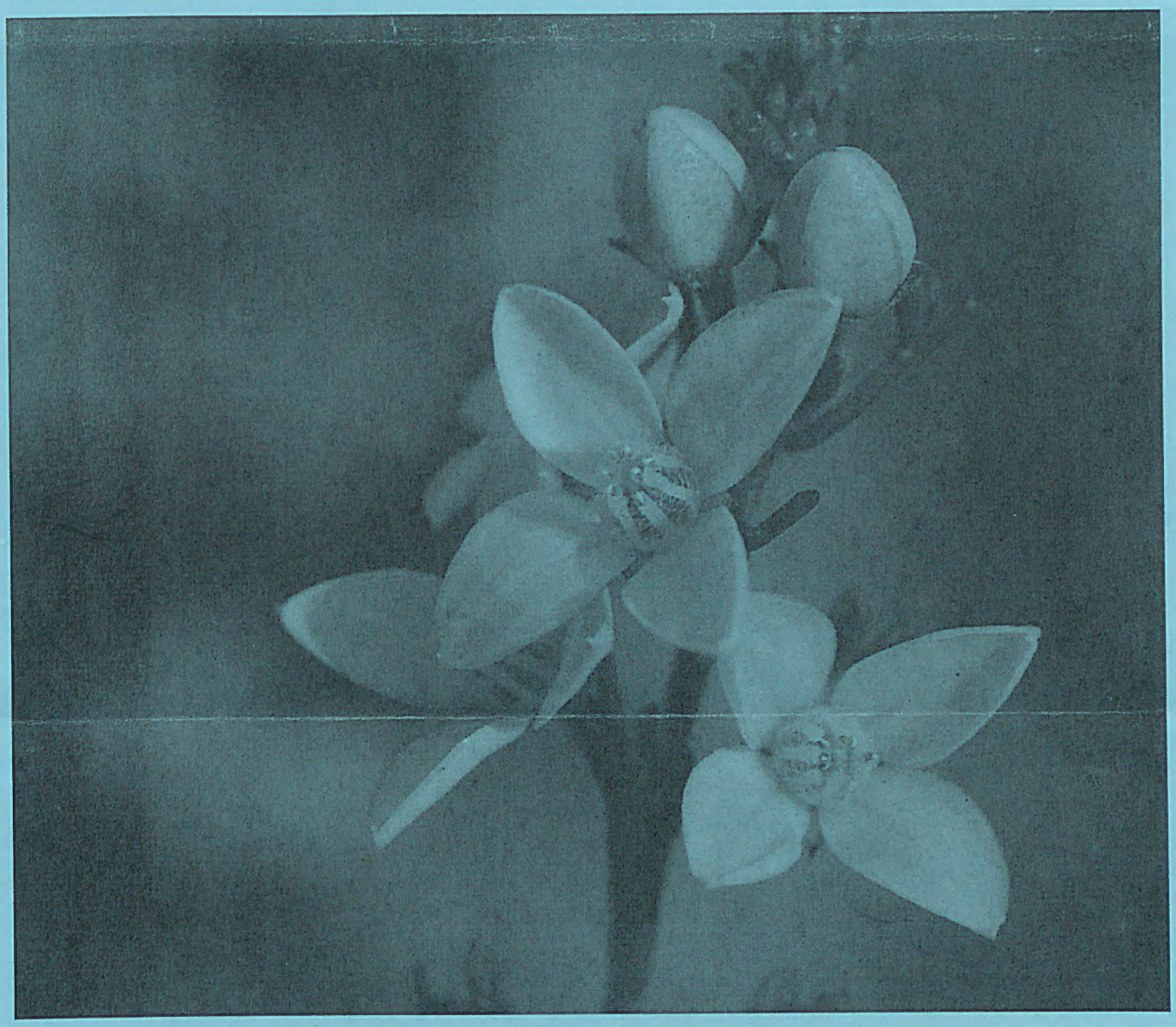

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE BENDIGO FIELD NATURALISTS CLUB

Bendigo Field Naturalists Club Inc.
Address for correspondence: PO Box 396, Bendigo 3552. Web address: www.BendigoFNC.com.au
ISSN 0812-423X e-mail address: info@bendigofnc.com.au

Office Bearers for 2013 - 2014

President	Richard Goonan	
Vice President	Bill Holdsworth	5443 4063
Secretary/Public Officer	Matt Comer	0409 162 627
Minute Secretary (gen meet'gs)	Kerrie Norris *(still require a back up)*	5447 8017
Minute secretary (committee)	Anne Bridley	5442 6188
Treasurer	Ben Goonan	
Membership Officer	Anne Bridley	5442 6188
Excursion organiser	John Lindner/Joy Clusker	5448 3406
Syllabus organiser	Ben Goonan	
Librarian	Diana Collier & Maryann Hill	5443 0137
Garden Convenor/Secretary	Jan Orr	
Hall Management	Maurie Lewis (assisted by Rob Moors)	0407 427179
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Co-editor	Richard Goonan	
Whirrakee mailing coordinator	Gemma Candy	
Website coordinator/Webmaster	Ben Goonan	

Membership of the Bendigo Field Naturalists Club is open to all those interested in Natural History. The subscription rates are: Single $40; Family $50; Concession: Single $35; Family $40. *Whirrakee* subscription only is $40.

General meetings are held on the second Wednesday of each month. The venue for General meetings is the Golden Square Senior Citizens Building, Old High Street, Golden Square. The meeting starts with a 10 minute thing-of-the night natural history segment. The invited speaker starts at 8:00pm and meetings conclude with supper. The Annual Meeting is held in September.

Committee meetings are held on the third Wednesday of each month at 6:00pm. Members of the Committee are the Office Bearer listed above and the following members: Anne Bridley, Kerrie Norris, John Lindner, Jenny Shield, Diana Collier, Devi Shanty

Excursions are conducted regularly and are advertised on the diary page of the *Whirrakee*. The assembly point for excursions is the Golden Square Senior Citizens Building, unless otherwise specified. Several interclub field naturalist campouts are held every year.

The Bendigo Field Naturalists Club has one sub-group (the Fauna Study Group) and is actively involved in local conservation issues. An **indigenous garden** has been established around the Golden Square Senior Citizens Building. Working bees are advertised on the *Whirrakee* diary page.

Fauna Study Group: Chairman: John Burtonclay, Fadersons Lane, Mandurang (5439 5710)
Secretary: Bill Holsworth, 13 Nabilla Crs., Bendigo (5443 4063)
Equipment Officer: Maurie Lewis (0407 427179)
Regular fauna excursions take place most Fridays. See page 11 for details.

Bird Observing: Club members conduct regular bird surveys. Please contact Anne Bridley 5442 6188 or Glenise Moors 5439 6254 for details. Special bird observations should be reported to Anne Bridley 5442 6188. To propose bird observing excursions please contact Kerrie Norris 5447 8017.

Front cover photo?...see page 2

WHIRRAKEE

Monthly Newsletter of the Bendigo Field Naturalist Club

Vol. 34, No. 9, October 2013

Whirrakee takes its name from the Whirrakee Wattle (*Acacia williamsonii*), which is virtually endemic to the Bendigo region

CONTENT

Item	Contributor	Page
Short notices		3
Colour photo section	various contributors	4
Call for help with field work	Renae Forbes	8
BFNC October campout notice	John Lindner	8
The Warby Ranges… and other memories	Peter Ellis	9
Some July and August Observations	M. Lewis via K. Norris/Rod Orr	10

Authors are responsible for the accuracy of the information they use and also for any opinions expressed in their articles. Contributions should be posted or e-mailed to the editor at least two days prior to the last Wednesday of the month. They will be included as soon as possible after they are received, although space restrictions occasionally require shortening of articles or holding them over till the following edition of *Whirrakee*.

Articles in *Whirrakee* may be reproduced, but permission should be obtained from the Bendigo Field Naturalists Club, and acknowledgment should be given to the author and the Club. Some back issues are still available on request.

Editor's Note

Some things usually change after an AGM and some things stay as always. As you can see from the inside front cover, some office bearers and committee members have changed. If you were wavering whether to throw your hat in the rink, but hesitated in the last minute, there is still time. A couple of vacancies on the committee and any number of 'assistants' jobs are still open, so just let someone know of your interest. I hope you have time to enjoy the 'sea of purple' (not from the football fans, but) from all the waxlip orchids and chocolate lilies. For me, it is one of the best sights of Bendigo in spring (see page 4).

Front page photographer: Rod Orr

Jan & Rod checked out the Diamond Hill/Spring Gully section of the forest South of Bendigo at the end of August and were very pleased to see that the Boronia Patch had been protected from the forest burns conducted earlier this year, following a last minute special request. The Boronia was flowering beautifully then and so were the small number of Globe Parrot-pea (*Dillwynia glaberrima*) plants that grow there among the much more numerous Boronia plants (*Boronia anemonifolia*)….Continued on page 10

Short Notices

Altered Whirrakee mailing format

You may have been surprised to receive your *Whirrakee* in an envelope this month. This has been a necessary change to previous mailing arrangements to offset the increased cost of producing the newsletter. Current costs exceed club revenues and this situation severely limits the clubs financial position. It could be argued that the limited resources available should be better utilised. Although membership fees have been marginally increased this year, *Whirrakee* production remains a financial loss. Changing the mailing arrangements and limiting the number of copies produced, will bring expenditure closer to a neutral position. A simple change to using envelopes will mean that no alteration to the *Whirrakee* format is required, so you can continue to enjoy reading the usual monthly newsletter. Unfortunately posting *Whirrakee* in an envelope will require folding, so you may need to practice your origami skills to successfully unfold it before reading. I would suggest a few hours tucked under a large fat book (something the size of the Flora of Victoria) will un-crease your *Whirrakee* enough for pleasant handling.

If you treasure your newsletter, the future success and viability of *Whirrakee* relies on member's contributions! Please consider writing a short article or sending in a photo. If you have any concerns or queries about the changes to mailing arrangements please don't hesitate to contact Richard Goonan.

Membership Fees for 2013 – 2014

Just a reminder that our new membership fees are as follows:

Single membership	**$40**
Family membership	**$50**
Single concession	**$35**
Family concession	**$40**
Subscriptions	**$40**

A renewal slip was included with your August *Whirrakee*. Please pay promptly if you have not already done so.

Email Notifications

If you wish to be advised promptly of interesting sightings, events or other special communications you may wish to subscribe to our club's email notifications service. Subscribers to the service who make an unusual or interesting sighting in our region can email all other members of the service.

Email **subscribe** in the subject line to info@bendigofnc.com.au if you wish to join the service. Include your full name in the body of the email.

To be added to the list you must first send an email to the address provided. This is the easiest way to manage the system.

Notice of a special general meeting

A special general meeting will be held at 7:30 on Wednesday 9th October (prior to the general meeting) at the Golden Square clubrooms to consider the following special resolution which has been moved by the club committee:

"That the Bendigo Field Naturalists Club adopt the proposed new rules of association."

It is necessary for 3/4 of those voting to be in favour for the resolution to be passed.

"A member who wishes to vote by proxy may inform the club secretary, Matthew Comer, of their vote no later than 24 hours before the time of the meeting.

Copies of the proposed new rules will be available at the September and October general meetings, by email from info@bfnc.com.au or by using the following web address: http://www.bendigofnc.com.au/fNatsNewRules.html. There won't be a link to this page on the public view BFNC web pages. The proposed new rules contain the club's new statement of purpose (see August *Whirrakee*) and are an amended version of the new Model Rules for an Incorporated Association as contained in the Associations Incorporation Reform Act 2012.

If the special resolution is passed, Consumer Affairs need to give their approval of the proposed rules before they become the club's rules.

Spring Orchids in gorgeous colours Photographer: Joy Clusker

Caladenia caerulea

Glossodia major in white (above) and purple (below). Is this fly just resting there Or is it looking for a reward? Do the white flowers of this species ever get pollinated…? Does anybody know?

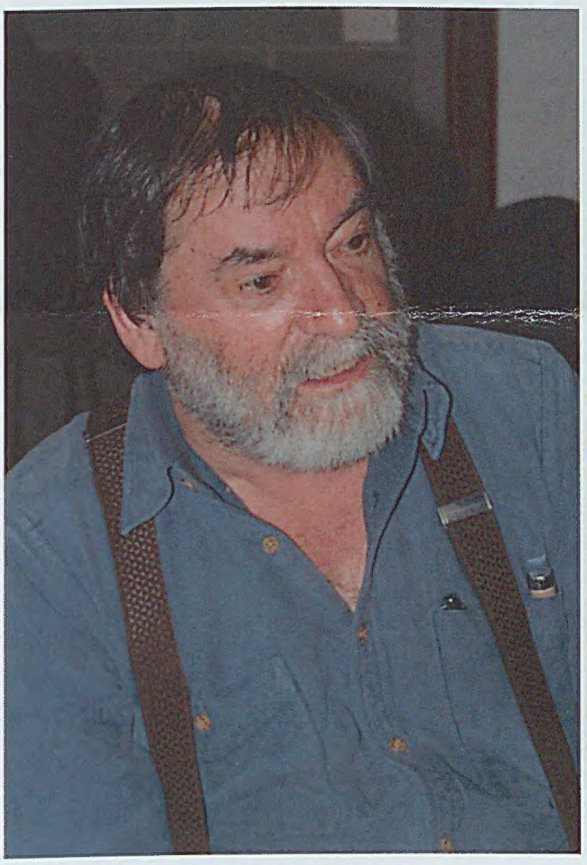
Caladenia carnea
(pink fingers)

Family Nature Club – an afternoon with the birds Photographed by Joy Clusker

Nicole Howie, who organised the activity with a captive audience. It was nice of Nicole to also organise the beautiful weather. Below, the participants made bird nests, almost as good as the birds

Down memory lane – the Warby Ranges in 1967 (see page 9) Photographer: Peter Ellis

Geomorphology of the Arabian peninsula with Dr. Phil Macumber (see p.10) Photos by J Clusker



Recording the sounds of the bush…Andrew Skeoch ready to record bird songs (photo by Sarah Koschak) and Yellow-tufted Honeyeater in Golden Wattle (Photo by Andrew Skeoch) Andrew will be giving a talk in October 10 (see back page)

Dillwynia glaberrima Flowering well in late August in the Spring Gully/Diamond Hill area (see page 10).

Anthracobia muelleri 'Charcoal Fungus' at Diamond Hill see observations on page 10 (photos by Rod Orr).

Call for help with field work

Effects of host-plant quality on the trophic structure of insect communities

Renae Forbes
La Trobe University, Bundoora, VIC, 3086

A number of forces such as host-plant quality influence the abundance and diversity of insect species within an ecosystem. Although ecologists have investigated the functional role of host-plant quality in insect communities, they have primarily employed a manipulative approach and so the importance of natural variation in plant quality is poorly understood. My project aims to determine the influence of:

(1) Spatial variation in edaphic and plant factors on the insect diversity of two native Australian shrubs, Gorse Bitter Pea (*Daviesia ulicifolia*) and Drooping Cassinia (*Cassinia arcuata*)
(2) Host-plant quality on the abundance of insects within related taxa

This study has important implications for the revegetation of degraded ecosystems and the potential of plant species to support native insects.

Field work will be conducted within a number of Trust for Nature covenants (between 10-12 sites), around the Bendigo-Seymour region from October to January. I am looking for some individuals to assist with the collection of leaf, soil and insect samples throughout this time. Leaves will simply be collected using scissors and stored in bags for nutrient content analysis and core soil samples will be taken using a stainless steel soil probe. Insect abundance and diversity will be assessed using either sweep-netting or insecticide spraying. Other measures to be taken include plant size and leaf weight.

No prior experience is required and it is up to the individual how much time they can invest and how often.

If you are interested in helping Renae, please indicate your availability to the BFNC email address at: info@bendigofnc.com.au
Ben Goonan will then get back to Renae with a coordinated response.

Bendigo Field Naturalist Club Proposed Spring Campout

Date Weekend 26 – 27 October 2013

Location Warby Ranges, Warby-Ovens National Park. This elongated park is located West of Wangaratta and north of Glenrowan
Organiser John Lindner, telephone 54483406
Notification Please notify me if you intend to participate. If I am not at home, please leave a clear message with your phone number and the number of people who will be coming with you
Campsite Wenhams Camp, at the southern end of the range. (Note: if it is very wet, at the advice of the ranger, we may have to move to Forest Camp at the northern end of the park. But hopefully not . . . .)
Distance Via Goornong, Colbinabbin, Rushworth, Murchison, Violet Town and Glenrowan, the distance to the campsite is 212km Allow 2.5 to 3 hours.
Map A sketch map of the route from Glenrowan township (32 kilometres) to the campsite will be supplied at the club meetings in September and October
Facilities
•Water tank attached to the (pit) toilet block, which is probably quite OK but may be stained brown by leaves. Hopefully there will be enough for washing and cleaning.
•Fireplace/barbeque
•Picnic tables
•Space for camping
Please bring •Your own drinking water
•Firewood, if you want a barbeque or a campfire
•Wet weather gear
•Walking boots
•Camera, binoculars
•All your food

Information You can download and print the information and map for the Warby-Ovens National Park from the Parks Victoria website at www.parks.vic.gov.au

Attractions Vegetation communities: Woodland on granite on the Warby Range, box-ironbark in the Killawarra Forest.

Interesting plants – eg. Austral Grass-tree, Spurwinged Wattle, orchids, Birds, particularly the Turquoise Parrot if we are lucky

Activitiess planned: Rather than an unstructured program where everybody does as they please, we may try to formalize some of the activities (eg. botany) so that we have a leader with a group interested in that subject for a set time

Walks: There are several walking tracks, around which other topics could be structured

- Salisbury Falls, 8.0 km return approx.
- Summit of Mount Warby, 2.0 km return
- Summit of Mount Glenrowan, 9.0 km return from Taminick Gap
- Pine Gully Nature Walk, 2.0 km loop from Pine Gully Picnic Area
- Friends Track, 4.6 km loop from Wenhams
- Kwat Kwat lookout, 1.0 km return from Friends Track, with views of the Ovens River valley and the Alps
- Killwarra Forest (Red Ironbark) at the northern end of the park

Program

Friday: Arrive in the afternoon or earlier
Saturday: You could come up Saturday but this leaves you a lot less time
am Activities from 9.00 am onwards (tbd)
pm Activities (to be decided)
Sunday: am Activities (to be decided)
pm Pack up and depart

The Warby Ranges at another time and other memories...
by Peter Ellis

With the Warby Ranges campout scheduled in October I thought the picture (see page 6) would be topical.
I took it June 1967 on a special trip I'd organised to the Warby Ranges after reading an article in the FNCV magazine of the day which had a photograph of Grass Trees in that locality and showing they had never been affected by bush fire their grass like skirts reached all the way to the ground. The article in the magazine centred around a Miss Dawson of Wangaratta FNC who knew the locality. I contacted Miss Dawson and she obliged to show us the site. So Bob Allen, Tom Patullo, Keith Handley and myself travelled across to the Warby Ranges, it was a wonderful day and we just marvelled at that grove of Grass Trees.

Keith Handley was a new Chemistry Teacher at the old Bendigo Technical College who had immigrated out from England. He was interested in natural history and wildlife photography and actually replaced Redvers Eddy who had retired in the September of 1965. I had Red as my practical Chemistry teacher and of course there was much talk of wildflowers, birds and geology, and it was Red who nominated myself a member of the club about 1964. Red used to draw up little 'mud maps' for me and I'd ride my bicycle out to the Whipstick or to the Mandurang Forest and Sedgwick Race on the south side to explore for wildflowers and photograph them. With Red's advice I had purchased a Practika camera and the latest Novoflex macro lens that Red himself used for the various photos that won awards in 'Photoflora'. I made a special train trip to Melbourne to Wagners in Elizabeth St to purchase the equipment that Red and Frank Cusack had advised me to do. When Red retired the previous year, we senior chemistry students, including Glenise Douglass (now Moors) and Rob Moors presented Red with the latest camera gadget bag as a gift. So I also purchased one for myself from Wagners which I still have.

So when Keith Handley arrived I knew some of the key wildflower localities to take him. I remember on one occasion at Ruedin's Eucalyptus Factory site, Keith found a nest of blue wren young, he set up his camera on a tripod and was about to take the picture. The parents were making a hell of a racket, I was concerned Keith was too close to the next. But it wasn't that at all. Suddenly, Keith leapt in the air with his camera and tripod, yelling and doing half parabolas (a Red Eddy expression) bounding away through the scrub. A brown

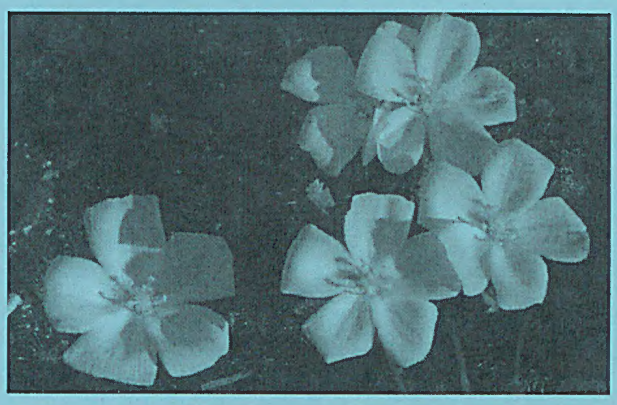
snake had slithered along, stuck its head in the nest and ate the baby birds. I taunted Keith for not pressing the button before he took off.

So that's Keith Handley in the photograph standing in front of the grass trees. He was a keen member of the BFNC for a couple of years, then with his homesick wife, daughter and son, returned to England, but only for a couple of years. They missed Australia and returned to Sydney. But today, I don't know where they are!

A special July Observation
Platypus *Ornithorhynchus anatinus*
Observed by Maurie Lewis in early July. Midday overcast weather Location Campaspe River (Doak's Reserve/Eppalock). Maurie was able to watch the platypus for quite some time as he sat quietly nearby.

Some August observations ...cont. from p.3
...the Boronia is flowering beautifully at present and so are the small number of Globe Parrot-pea (*Dillwynia glaberrima*) plants that grow there among the much more numerous Boronia plants (*Boronia anemonifolia*) (see front cover and page 7)
This is a very small area and deserves to be protected from fire. The surroundings are recovering very slowly but will remain devoid of shrubs and ground-cover plants for several years. Many of the eucalypts in the burnt areas have been killed by the fires although there are signs of recovery from several species which are beginning to show epicormic growth.

Much of the ground is covered with charcoal which is providing suitable habitat for mosses and some other species. We were able to find a small patch of Fungi which is also favoured by the charcoal residue from shrub and tree destruction (see page 7).
As we walked further through the now 'very open' Open Woodland we found several large patches of Scented Sundew, *Drosera whittakeri*, whose bright white flowers showed in very stark contrast to the blackened and bare areas of poor clay soil.



Of course, this species of *Drosera* is quite common and widespread in our surrounding bushland although the other 2 species of flowering plants in this forest are very rare and localised in the Bendigo Region. The charcoal-adapted fungus is interesting to find but not at the expense of these locally rare flowering plants.

August General Meeting: 'The archaeology of Arabia in the context of water and landscape' by Phil Macumber
Author: Sabine Wilkens

Phil Macumber is a well-known hydrogeologist with huge experience in the Central Victorian region, but on the night of the September general meeting, he took us to the Arabian peninsula, the rift valley and the Jordan River, areas where early humans migrated out of Africa, and locations recounted in biblical stories. In this seemingly hostile mountainous landscape, there are springs fed by ancient groundwater, which have run continuously for tens- and hundreds of thousands of years and which have served as central points for human settlements and are now treasure troves for the study of early human civilizations. One such area is at Pella, where broken layered sediments reveal tools and utensils from tens of thousands of years ago. This really spurs the imagination! The most amazing thing for me was that Phil had brought some of these tools with him and you could see the stone axes and arrow heads that our forefathers made and carried, perhaps when they were first dispersing, to eventually colonise the entire planet (see page 6). This was an extremely interesting talk, and I thank the speaker for sharing this incredible adventure.

Diary

All Club meetings are held at the Golden Square Senior Citizens Building, Old High St Golden Square, unless otherwise indicated.

Wednesday October 9 7.30pm

Associate Professor Graeme Coulson from the Department of Zoology, The University of Melbourne, will talk to us about 'Living with kangaroos: biology and management from Melbourne to the Mallee'

Regular Fauna Excursions

Every Friday morning starting at around 9 to 9:30 the Fauna Group inspects nest boxes in the Spring Gully area. The excursions are led by Maurie Lewis, 16 Vains St. Golden Square. Phone 0407 427 179. Phone Maurie to confirm exact departure times and location. If you don't phone and go directly to Maurie's house and find nobody at the house between 9 and 9:30, then the excursion is not on.

It may be that these excursions are coming to an end. Make sure you ring Maurie if you'd like to go on such an excursion.

Family Nature Club

Sunday 20th October. Kennington Reservoir, issues for local wildlife, which will include a talk by a WRIN member about local wildlife.

Registration:

Bendigonatureclub@gmail.com or 5443-1326

Check out their 2011 and 2012 activities at http://bendigofamilynatureclub.blogspot.com/

Bendigo Native Plant Group meeting.

All interested people are welcome to come along. Meeting starts at 7:30pm on the third Tuesday of the month, Golden Square Senior Citizens Hall.

Next meeting: 15th of October. The speaker is Peter Miller, Proprietor, The Hanging Garden. 'Culture and mounting of Australian native epiphytes and lithophytes'.

Wildlife Rescue & Information Network Inc.

W.R.I.N. is an organisation dedicated to the care of orphaned, sick or injured native animals. It is fully endorsed by the Dept of Sustainability and Environment.

Please call our Emergency Number for Help for Fauna in Need. Phone: 0419 356433.

'Understanding the Natural Soundscape' a presentation by Andrew Skeoch

by Frances Cincotta

On **Thursday 10th October** Newstead Landcare Group will hold their Annual General Meeting, and we are delighted to have been offered a presentation by one of our members, **Andrew Skeoch** of Listening Earth.

All Bendigo Field Naturalists and the general public are welcome to attend this event at Newstead Community Centre starting at 8pm. We ask for a gold coin donation to cover costs.

Andrew describes his presentation thus: "*The sounds of our natural environment are comprised of many voices; birdsong, insect choirs, frog choruses. Collectively, the songs and calls of all these species form the biophony; the living sounds of our natural landscape. Studying how all these diverse vocalisations interact in the acoustic environment, can tell us a fascinating story about how our bushland ecosystems work and have evolved*".

Featuring sound recordings and sonograms, from local places to habitats around the world, Andrew will explore the fascinating understandings emerging from the new field of soundscape ecology.

Many of you will be familiar with Andrew's recording of birdsong on a CD in the back of the *Wildlife of the Box-Ironbark Country* book by Chris Tzaros, and this event is a great chance to meet with and learn from a local expert.

For more information, contact Frances Cincotta, Newstead Landcare President

Phone 5476 2691